

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 01400 021938Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /081 W
-----001543 022323Z /21

R 021910Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6697
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1400

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, GY
SUBJECT: WIDESPREAD APATHY CHARACTERIZES MAY DAY OBSERVANCE

REF: GEORGETOWN 1381

1. DESPITE ORGANIZING EFFORTS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA (GOG) AND OPPOSITION-AFFILIATED GUYANA AGRICULTURAL AND GENERAL WORKER'S UNION (GAWU), LABOR DAY RALLIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WERE POORLY ATTENDED. IN THE SUGAR BELT, MANY WORKERS ARE SAID TO HAVE STAYED ON THE JOB RATHER THAN PARTICIPATE (THEY ARE PAID AT PIECE RATES). AT REGIONAL RALLIES, BOTH GOG MINISTERS AND LABOR LEADERS COULD ONLY ATTRACT A FEW HUNDRED PARTICIPANTS.

2. IN GEORGETOWN, EMBOFFS ESTIMATE THAT ONLY 2500 ATTENDED THE PRINCIPAL RALLY AT NATIONAL PARK, THIS DESPITE GOG EFFORTS THROUGH THE MEDIA TO STIR UP INTEREST AND GENERATE A LARGE TURNOUT. MANY OF THOSE ATTENDING WERE ACTUALLY MEMBERS OF THE ARMY AND PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN MUFTI. RANK AND FILE LABOR PARTICIPATION NUMBERED UNDER 1,000.

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PAGE 02 GEORGE 01400 021938Z

3. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE GEORGETOWN GROUP, TRADE UNION CONGRESS (TUC) PRESIDENT BASIL BLAIR CALLED UPON THE GOG TO END REDEPLOYMENT OR ELSE FACE THE WRATH OF THE TUC. HE ALSO CRITICIZED THE GOG FOR ITS FINANCIAL INABILITY TO PAY WORKERS BACK WAGES PROMISED TO THEM.

4. PRINCIPAL SPEAKER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PTOLEMY REID, APPEARING FOR PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM (WHO RETURNS TO GUYANA MAY 5 FROM A 24-DAY TRIP ABROAD), BLAMED GUYANA'S CURRENT ECONOMIC WOES ON THE MANIPULATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM, AND OTHER UNIDENTIFIED FORCES "BEYOND OUR BORDERS." FOUR PAGE HANDOUTS CIRCULATED BY PNC AT THE RALLY ENTITLED "FEAR ON SALE" APPARENTLY WAS OUTLINE FOR REID SPEECH. OUTLINE INCLUDED WARNING QUOTE FROM LENIN AS WARNING THAT "WORKERS MUST EXPOSE TREACHEROUS ACTIVITIES BY TRAITORS IN THEIR OWN MOVEMENT." OUTLINE ALSO STRESSED THEME COMMON TO PM RECENT SPEECHES THAT "PHRASE-MONGERING ABOUT LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, BROTHERHOOD OF MAN, FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION IS NO MORE THAN A POMPOUS DECLARATION AND PHRASES BY ENEMIES OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. EXAMINE YOUR RIGHT TO FOOD, CLOTHES AND HOMES." TEXT OF OUTLINE FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.

5. COMMENT: GOG'S MAY DAY OBSERVANCE, DESPITE EXTENSIVE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT, WAS LACKLUSTRE, SIGNIFYING LOW STATE TO WHICH GOVERNMENT'S POPULARITY HAS SUNK DUE TO HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, SHORTAGES OF BASIC COMMODITIES AND CONTINUING POWER OUTAGES. DISTURBING NOTE WAS STRUCK, HOWEVER, IN ACTING PRIMIN'S SPEECH AND HANDOUT CIRCULATED AT RALLY: I.E., SUGGESTION THAT OUTSIDE FORCES BENT ON DESTABILIZING THE NATION ARE REAL PERPETRATORS OF COUNTRY'S

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PAGE 03 GEORGE 01400 021938Z

ECONOMIC WOES. DE-STABILIZATION THEME HAS NOT BEEN HEARD HERE FOR SOME MONTHS.
BURKE

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